



Guidance for Setting Clergy Salaries

Ministry is a calling for clergy. They enter the ministry not for the money nor for the status but to build up the make disciples to transform the world. Clergy enter ministry to further the mission of the church for the glory of God. You cannot place a dollar value on calling.

How much clergy are paid, however, has a direct correlation to morale, the ability to attract the best pastoral leaders for the church, and whether or not clergy need additional income to support themselves and family. While money is not a top motivator for pastors, studies show that when people feel appropriately compensated, then salary is an even lower motivator for excellence in ministry.

In most churches, the pastor's compensation is the highest line item in a budget. As with most service type organizations, salaries actually are program, or in the case of the church, ministry including worship planning and leading, preaching, teaching, administrative oversight, pastoral counseling and care, stewardship education, children and youth oversight, and other ministry such as mission engagement.

In comparison to other United Methodist Conferences in the Northeast and across the denomination, Greater New Jersey has been making great strides in raising the basic minimum salary for full time ministry. This, however, does not translate when all GNJ salaries for full time clergy are compared across the jurisdiction and denomination. Though the area that makes up GNJ is one of the five most expensive places to live in the United States, our average conference salary ranks 25th of 54 conferences, and 4.4% below the Denominational Average Compensation in 2021.

Too often, setting compensation is done quickly without a lot of conversation or planning. It is done one year at a time, and rarely do congregations begin to plan goals to work towards. The information in this guide is meant for both short-term consideration as well as longer-term planning.

Some of the factors that the Staff Parish Relations Committee should consider in the setting of pastoral compensation are found below. The goal should be setting a salary that is equitable with other clergy and comparable professionals in the community, as well as what is fair to expect of a pastor. This is particularly important for less than full time salaries, as congregations often have an expectation for full time service for a part time salary.

Education

Persons ordained as elder or deacon are required to complete a bachelor's plus a master's degree. For an elder, a three-year Masters of Divinity degree is the foundational degree. Deacons may complete different master's level programs which are, at a minimum, two years beyond a bachelor's degree. In addition, clergy are required to do continuing education annually, and many have completed additional masters or a doctoral degree that have a direct benefit on the quality of ministry in the church. Local Pastors are required to continued theological studies either through a degree program or the Course of Study.

Pastoral Expectations

The following are expectations GNJ has of all clergy.

1. Connect and relate well with church leadership and membership and community residents.
2. Develop leaders within the congregation.
3. Lead the congregation to deeper faith and service in the world.
4. Increase vitality through inspiring worship and messages that grows attendance, attracting and making new disciples, and engaging disciples in small groups, community hands-on mission and generous giving,
5. Raise sufficient funds for community and world mission, ongoing congregational ministry, shared ministries and salary and benefits.

Staff Parish Relations Committees are encouraged to review the pastoral expectations and use this as a means of determining excellence in ministry. If the pastor is meeting and exceeding expectations in each or most of these areas, the committee may wish to consider a merit increase.

Church Size and Responsibilities

Congregations vary in size as well as complexity. This likewise becomes more complex depending on the community in which the church is located, as pastors are called to serve the church and community. Traditionally, salaries have been set based on the relative economic strength of the church and community. However, there are churches where a full time pastor serves a congregation that averages 40 persons in worship each week (considered a family size congregation), while other churches have 150 persons + in worship (a program size congregation) each week with a part-time pastor, almost always related to the economic level of the church and community. Still other churches worship 250 and above, which requires a different style pastoral leadership. It is important for an SPRC to take time to be in discussion around this and to work with the District Superintendent in making plan to move towards a more equitable level of compensation.

Equity With Other Professions

Pastor’s compensation is often compared to that of teachers in the public school systems. While starting salaries for pastors (plus housing expenses) are often comparable with teachers, annual increments and added compensation for additional educational levels shows that these gaps widen very quickly. Some pastors are also serving in capacities that are more equivalent to an administrator. The chart below provides some quick reference for you to think about for teachers and administrators throughout GNJ:

Job Title	Salary	Location
Public School Teacher	\$59,569	Atlantic City, NJ
Public School Teacher	\$63,105	Bayonne, NJ
Public School Teacher	\$63,658	Bergenfield, NJ
Public School Teacher	\$63,603	Bloomfield, NJ
School Principal	\$116,278	Trenton, NJ
School Principal	\$117,305	Union, NJ
School Principal	\$123,365	Union City, NJ
School Principal	\$110,115	Vineland, NJ
School Superintendent	\$167,336	Atlantic City, NJ
School Superintendent	\$177,270	Bayonne, NJ
School Superintendent	\$178,822	Bergenfield, NJ
School Superintendent	\$178,667	Bloomfield, NJ
School Superintendent	\$167,025	Camden, NJ
School Superintendent	\$178,667	Clifton, NJ

What about associate and assistant pastors? How can this resource be used to set associate and assistant pastor’s salaries? Church leadership should always work with the lead pastor on setting associate and assistant pastor’s salaries. The lead pastor should do an appraisal for the associate and assistant pastors and share his or her salary recommendation with the church leadership. When setting the salary for associates and assistants depending on the size of the church and responsibilities.

Setting salaries is both an art and a science. While a basic minimum salary is a requirement of the Discipline, the goal should be to move the congregation to faithfully support and encourage clergy leadership. This is more than just salary and housing, but also includes recognition and thanks for a ministry that blesses the church and the community.